“As I Have Given Orders to the Churches”  
Compiled by Paul R. Blake

Introduction:
A. There are two distinctions that must be understood in order to apply the teaching of the New Testament for the Lord’s Church:
   1. Between the church universal and local churches  
      a. The church universal consists of all Christians in all places and at all times  
      b. Local congregations are gatherings of Christians committedly and collectively serve the Lord’s will in a single location  
   2. Between individual and collective works  
      a. Individual works are works that are to be done by Christians working alone; context will specify  
      b. Collective works are works to be done by Christians working together as a local congregation  
B. The church universal has no earthly organization in which to do its work; what work it does is done as individuals who live and work in the world  
   1. The church local has organization and is the only organization among Christians authorized to do collective work  
   2. Consider the work of the church

I. EVANGELISM: PREACHING THE GOSPEL
   A. This is the primary work of the church, because it is the purpose for which the church was built  
      1. 1Tim. 3:15; Eph. 3:8-11  
   B. The early churches were active in evangelism - Acts 13:1-3; 2Cor. 11:8-9  
   C. The Lord requires this - Matt. 28:19-20; 1Peter 2:9-10

II. EDIFICATION: PREPARING THE SAINTS FOR SERVICE
   A. Implied by its organization - Acts 20:28; 1Peter 5:1-2  
   B. Worship is designed to edify - Col. 3:16  
      1. Preaching, teaching, prayers, communion, offering all edify  
   C. Explicitly stated in the scriptures - Eph. 4:11-16

III. BENEVOLENCE: PROVIDING FOR NEEDY SAINTS
   A. This is neither the primary, nor the secondary work of the church  
      1. For years this has been taught as the third work of the church  
      2. In practice, it is an occasional adjunct of the second work of the church, edification  
      3. In reality according to examples in the New Testament, it is a limited manifestation of fellowship in a local church  
   B. The early church cared for its members  
      1. The church at Jerusalem - Acts 4:32-35  
      3. The churches of Macedonia and Achaia toward brethren in Jerusalem  
         a. Rom. 15:25-26
C. Its organization and worship accommodated this work
   1. Deacons were appointed - Phil. 1:1; 1Tim 3:8-13
   2. They served the congregation in this area - Acts 6:1-6
   3. The collection for needy saints was part of the weekly assembly
      a. 1Cor. 16:1-2

D. Limitations to benevolence
   1. 1Tim. 5:9-16
   2. Examples of church benevolence are limited to needy saints
      a. In every case of church benevolence where money was taken
         from the church treasury, the recipients were believers in need
      b. Rom. 15:25-26; 1Cor. 16:1; 2Cor. 8:1-4, 9:1

E. Individually, Christians are expected to be "good Samaritans" and help those
   in the world as they have opportunity and ability.
   1. James 1:26-27; Gal. 6:10
   2. This implies that the local church was not intended to be a social
      agency to satisfy all of the physical needs in the world.
   3. It has neither the organization nor resources to do so

Conclusion:
   A. The church has the all important work of spreading the gospel; it is not
      equipped or designed to do anything else
   B. "To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and
      ever. Amen." (Eph. 3:21)